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Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic

Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, on 25 November 1998, adopted resolution 53/34 entitled "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic", in which it took note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/488) and requested the relevant organizations, organs and bodies of the United Nations system to render all appropriate assistance that States members of the zone may seek in their joint efforts to implement the declaration of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to keep the implementation of resolution 41/11 of 27 October 1986 and subsequent resolutions on the matter under review and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, taking into account, *inter alia*, the views expressed by Member States.

2. Pursuant to resolution 53/34, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale dated 24 May 1999 to the Governments of the States Members of the United Nations requesting their views on the implementation of the declaration of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic. On 18 May 1999, letters were also dispatched to the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations requesting them to submit their contributions for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General by 30 July.

3. As at 30 September, two Governments had replied and communications had been received from five of the organizations and United Nations bodies addressed. Those replies are reflected in sections II and III of the present report respectively. Any further replies received will be incorporated in an addendum to the report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[30 July 1999]

1. The Argentine Republic is gratified by the outcome of the fifth ministerial meeting of the States members of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic, held in Buenos Aires on 21 and 22 October 1998. Argentina's offer to host a meeting of this importance was prompted by its interest in strengthening peace in the zone and promoting cooperative relations among the member countries. Argentina believes that the zone provides an unparalleled opportunity for discussion and an excellent framework for expanding development strategies and trade between the two continents, as relations between them grow increasingly close, active and dynamic.

2. At the conclusion of the fifth meeting, the States members of the zone adopted by consensus a final declaration and a plan of action. The declaration underscores the determination to increase cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as the conservation of marine fish stocks, the promotion of trade and investment, the promotion of technical cooperation, the struggle against drug trafficking, the conservation of freshwater resources and the appropriate regulation of maritime transport of radioactive wastes.

3. The plan of action is the first such document adopted in the framework of the ministerial meetings of States members of the zone, and its purpose is to put into practice the measures agreed upon in the declaration. The Argentine Republic, as coordinator of the standing committee for the zone, proposed several courses of action as a follow-up to the plan of action, and they have been submitted for the consideration of the other members of the zone.

4. The Argentine Republic reaffirms its conviction that the objectives of peace and cooperation that inspired the establishment of the zone can be achieved only insofar as the institutions of representative democracy and total respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms come into full force in the countries of the region.

5. With regard to stronger trade ties in the zone, as advocated in paragraph 3 of the Buenos Aires plan of action, the Argentine Republic has invited member countries to publicize trade fairs and commercial missions by way of national publications on the subject to be distributed among the States members of the zone.

6. Members of the zone again urged ratification of or accession to the New York Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (1995) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (1993). In the light of the latter instrument and with a view to avoiding cases of fishing vessels' flying dual flags, members of the Zone undertook to cooperate with each other in providing information regarding the registration of fishing vessels flying their flags.

7. As part of the cooperation in the prevention of drug abuse and the struggle against drug trafficking and related

crimes (para. 7 of the Buenos Aires plan of action), Argentina has proposed exchanging information on such subjects as the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, prevention and assistance programmes, money-laundering and chemical precursors.

8. Regarding security issues, the Argentine Republic has begun to circulate various international instruments among the countries of the zone in the hope of strengthening regional consensus on security issues and giving impetus to the international conviction that the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic must be a region untouched by the arms race and free of nuclear weapons.

9. Argentina invites the international community to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (1997).

10. It is to be hoped that the conflicts which unfortunately still affect States members of the zone may be settled with the speed that the humanitarian emergency requires. In the interim, the Argentine Republic considers that the zone provides a favourable context for offering any nation that requires it its willing collaboration in the peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region. Argentina is, in fact, taking an active part in United Nations peace-keeping operations and stands ready to go on contributing to the consolidation of peace, security, justice and the growth of the States members of the zone.

11. On the question of international humanitarian assistance, attention is drawn to the progress of the White Helmets initiative, presented to the international community and adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in 1994 (resolution 49/139 B). Within the zone, the White Helmets have provided assistance in countries as diverse as Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. In order to bolster these efforts, Argentina has asked the States members of the zone to establish their own national coordination centre focal points for the White Helmets initiative, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the plan of action issued at the latest ministerial meeting of the States members of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic.

12. Concerning statistics, the Argentine Republic is currently preparing a register of the specialized offices in each country, with a view to identifying thematic areas in which an exchange of information would be useful, and eventually creating a database centred in New York.

13. Argentina is interested in having all the countries that form part of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic establish a national coordination centre with a view to facilitating links among themselves and communicating more easily.

14. It is important to point out that in the South Atlantic, the colonial status of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands still persists, affecting the territorial integrity of the Argentine Republic. Argentina expresses its satisfaction over the greater understanding and degree of reconciliation achieved by the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Despite the efforts that Argentina has made to promote dialogue and a peaceful and definitive solution to the question of the Malvinas Islands, its commitment to respect the way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas and the many calls by the international community for a negotiated solution, it has not proved possible to restart negotiations towards ending the sovereignty dispute. The Argentine Republic believes that solving this serious problem would make it possible to consolidate once and for all stability and cooperation in the South Atlantic.

Brazil

[Original: English]
[29 July 1999]

1. The zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic has been recognized by the international community as a valuable mechanism that provides the 24 countries from the two shores of the South Atlantic with an important framework for concerted efforts in the pursuit of the common goals of peace, social and economic development and protection of the environment. The support received by the General Assembly through its resolutions on this matter is indicative of the fact that the relevance of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic is by no means limited to its Member States but also has a significant impact on the promotion of the objectives of the United Nations.

2. The Government of Brazil believes that there are three priority areas in which the zone's potential can be most fruitfully put to use: denuclearization of the region, protection of the marine environment and cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking.

3. There can be no doubt that the goal of complete denuclearization of the South Atlantic region is achievable. The Tlatelolco and Pelindaba treaties already provide a basic frame of reference for this endeavour. With Brazil's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, all States in the zone are now parties to this treaty.

Furthermore, the integration of a denuclearized South Pacific with the Rarotonga and Bangkok treaties would make possible the prospect of a Southern Hemisphere free of nuclear weapons.

4. With respect to the protection of the marine environment, Brazil understands that the creation of new mechanisms on the issue, within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, would bring a positive contribution to prevent accidents and to promote the exchange of information and cooperation.

5. The fight against drug trafficking is another objective to be actively pursued. To that end, Brazil is convinced that coordination of efforts within the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic can be decisive. Bilateral agreements between South Atlantic States, as well as multilateral activities such as the anti-drug initiative launched in the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic (Somerset West, South Africa), are instrumental in fostering the effectiveness of actions undertaken against this form of organized crime.

6. In order to fully achieve its goals, the zone needs the continuing support of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme and international financial institutions.

7. The Fifth Ministerial Meeting, held in Buenos Aires in October 1998, once again renewed the commitment of Member States to the objectives of the zone. Its final declaration and the innovative plan of action adopted on that occasion have set out various modalities of cooperation for the common purpose of ensuring peace, security and development.

8. Brazil attaches great importance to the strengthening of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic and will continue to work actively with other South Atlantic countries and with the United Nations membership at large for the full implementation of resolution 41/11.

III. Replies received from organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

A. Department of Disarmament Affairs

1. The Department of Disarmament Affairs has supported and encouraged the efforts of States of the South Atlantic region to consolidate the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) and to accelerate the ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba) by all States concerned, so that they would enter into force as soon as possible.

2. The Department has held two seminars on the illicit flow of arms under the auspices of its revitalized regional centres for peace and disarmament in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Participants at the meetings included representatives of the region's ministries of foreign affairs, military and police institutions, international experts and representatives of regional organizations. The purpose of these workshops, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/77 T of 4 December 1998, was to address the human suffering caused by illicit trafficking in small arms, to enable Governments to better understand the issue and to develop more effective means of addressing the problem. They examined the magnitude of the phenomenon and the exploration of possible measures to combat illicit circulation and trafficking as well as the United Nations role in combating the problem. Participants called for a continuation of that role in regional disarmament matters and commended the Organization for its establishment of permanent forums for arms and security information and debate.

3. After the Government of Liberia decided to destroy some 31,000 decommissioned weapons collected at the end of its seven-year civil war, the Department participated in consultations leading to the actual destruction of those weapons in late July 1999. The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa served as certifier of the destruction process at the request of the Government of Liberia.

B. Department of Public Information

1. The adoption of General Assembly resolution 53/34 on 25 November 1998 was highlighted by Department of Public Information radio news programmes in English, French, Russian, Dutch and Kiswahili, produced for broadcasting organizations worldwide. The subject was emphasized by the press release services at Headquarters in New York and Geneva (English and French) and by United Nations information centres and services, particularly those located in the region covered by the zone.

2. The Radio and Central News Service, in its news bulletins, extensively covered the situations in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Other topics covered that were relevant to the region included: massacres of women, children and elderly persons

in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, a new wave of internally displaced persons in Angola, humanitarian assistance in Sierra Leone, the adoption in Buenos Aires of a plan of action to reduce the risk of global climate change, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, multinational investment and democratization in Latin America and drug trafficking in the South Atlantic States of Africa and South America.

3. In addition, the Department produced eight feature programmes, in English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and other languages. The topics covered were:

(a) Former child soldiers in Liberia;

(b) Eight fallen peacekeepers in Angola;

(c) Increase of temperature — climate change;

(d) United Nations efforts in the Congo;

(e) Angola;

(f) Disarmament: non-nuclear proliferation including an interview with Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations;

(g) Missiles and their impact on global security, including an interview with Emundo Fujita, Special Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil;

(h) Global security, including an interview with Antônio Patriota, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations.

4. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva briefed the press on the disastrous effects of El Niño in Paraguay; the humanitarian and peace processes in Sierra Leone and Angola; and the Security Council ministerial meeting on Africa on 25 September 1998 as well as the presidential statement following the meeting. It also arranged press conferences for various United Nations officials concerned with the situation in Africa. Other information centres and information services publicized the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, the Secretary-General's article on "An Africa that Africa Deserves", demining and nuclear disarmament, the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem and the fiftieth anniversaries of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of United Nations peacekeeping.

5. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to collect and index in its UNBIS/Horizon database all United Nations documents and publications and some non-United Nations materials on the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic.

6. The Department's publication *Yearbook of the United Nations* printed the text of General Assembly resolution 53/34, as well as a brief text on the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/53/488).

7. *Africa Recovery*, a quarterly journal, published several articles highlighting issues of importance to the African countries in the South Atlantic region. The subjects ranged from peacemaking and reconciliation to environmental and economic matters:

(a) The June 1999 issue examined the impact on Southern African countries of the wide-ranging trade pact between South Africa and the European Union;

(b) The April 1999 issue published a cover story examining the impact of the euro on the countries of the CFA franc zone, a country profile of Namibia examining its socio-economic development, the progress made in peacemaking and democratization in the Central African Republic, the rehabilitation of war victims in Sierra Leone, a report on the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations conventions to combat desertification and appeals by Sierra Leone for international intervention to end the conflict in that country;

(c) The December 1998 issue reported on Nigeria's privatization programme, which promises to be one of the largest in Africa, the opening up of new markets for African countries through the Internet and land distribution in Zimbabwe and Namibia;

(d) The November 1998 issue highlighted the search for a negotiated peace in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(e) The August 1998 issue reported on the efforts by the Secretary-General to seek solutions to African crises, particularly in Nigeria, the efforts of African countries in fighting international drug trafficking in cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the main findings of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), the problem of the proliferation of small arms in Africa, the post-conflict reconstruction of Liberia and the rehabilitation of child victims in war-torn Sierra Leone.

8. The latest edition of the publication *Basic Facts about the United Nations* highlights issues of direct concern to the South Atlantic region, including peacemaking efforts in Africa, the fight against landmines, responding to emergencies and coordinating relief assistance, and

environmental initiatives, especially with regard to the oceans and efforts to combat global warming.

C. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

1. The work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in support of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic includes coordinating humanitarian operations in countries of the zone affected by conflict, such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone.

2. The integrated regional information networks (IRINs), based in the field, provide information and analyses from a regional perspective to a variety of audiences. Since 1995, the Central and East Africa IRIN, based in Nairobi, has analysed and synthesized information on developments in the Great Lakes region. IRIN expanded its geographical coverage to include West Africa and Southern Africa by establishing offices in Abidjan and Johannesburg. Together, IRIN offices issue daily and weekly reports for more than 4,000 subscribers. Overall, it is estimated that they reach at least 10,000 readers around the world. By fostering greater awareness and understanding of regional issues and events, IRIN seeks to contribute to better-informed and more effective humanitarian action, including emergency preparedness and advocacy.

3. The 1999 consolidated appeals, a joint inter-agency planning tool that aims to raise the resources needed to ensure timely humanitarian assistance, were launched for Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone. The consolidated appeal process is an overall strategy that enables the United Nations system to set clear goals and define priorities for the humanitarian programme in a given country and provides a framework for joint programming, common prioritization and joint resource mobilization.

4. Strategic frameworks have been developed in countries in crisis with the aim of defining a coherent and effective multi-sectoral United Nations response. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is currently working on the development of a strategic framework for Sierra Leone.

5. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has also responded to natural disasters by establishing a disaster response system in Geneva, operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which monitors field situations to identify natural disasters. It also issues situation reports as soon as it is alerted to a disaster. Situation reports provide detailed information on the evolving disaster, including damage caused, actions taken, assistance needed and international aid provided. In this context, during 1999 situation reports have been issued for the earthquakes in Colombia (January) and Mexico (June).

6. In addition, during the period under review, United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams, which provide assistance in damage and needs assessment and the coordination of relief activities during the initial phase of a disaster, were sent to Brazil (forest fires, April 1998), the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Hurricane Georges, September/October 1998), Honduras and Nicaragua (Hurricane Mitch, November 1998) and Colombia (earthquake, February 1999).

D. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization promotes international cooperation in all parts of the world oceans and within the South Atlantic, in particular:

(a) Among the 35 Atlantic shipping lines in its Ship-of-Opportunity Programme, 20 are totally within the South Atlantic;

(b) Its global sea-level observing system encompasses, among its almost 300 core tide gauge stations, some 30 around the South Atlantic and on various islands;

(c) Its Data Buoy Cooperation Panel has as one of its action groups the International South Atlantic Buoy Programme, which maintains some 60 drifting buoys currently at sea;

(d) The Pilot Research Moored Array in the tropical Atlantic can be considered as a cooperative activity of interest to countries bordering the South Atlantic.

E. United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

In the context of its drug control projects, both in South America, mainly Brazil, and in Southern Africa, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention is creating substantive linkages and operational synergies to promote cooperation in two specific fields:

(a) Interdiction of drugs from Brazil to Africa;

(b) Drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention targeting injecting drug users. South Atlantic cooperation could start in 2000.